



## **CHAYAT HASHAVUA: DONKEY**

### **CAN ANYONE TEACH US THE HEBREW NAME FOR A DONKEY?**

- It's *chamor* (חמור), from the root letters חמר.
- The basic meaning of the root is “to be red” or reddish brown, which is a common color of many donkeys.
- The Hebrew name for female donkeys is *aton*, from the root אתן, which means to take small steps.

### **ALTHOUGH THE DONKEY’S FATE IS TO CARRY BURDENS, THE BIBLE COMMANDS US NOT TO MISTREAT THEM OR FAIL TO CARE FOR THEM.**

- We are taught not to put them in harness with an ox, for instance, because the donkey takes shorter steps and would suffer pain.
- We are taught to help a donkey that has fallen under its load, even if it belongs to someone who we don’t like or who has been unkind to us.

### **IT’S TIME FOR THE DONKEY QUIZ!**

- What are the two most important ways that we use donkeys? (To carry freight and people.)
- How high is the average donkey’s shoulder from the ground? (About four feet.)
- How long does a donkey usually live? (25 to 50 years)
- How fast can the fastest donkeys run—20 to 30, 30 to 40, or 40 to 50 miles per hour? (30 to 40)
- Some places in the world people eat donkey meat—is it kosher? (No, the donkey does not chew the cud or have a split hoof.)

### **DONKEYS WERE ALSO CHERISHED BY PRINCES AND GREAT LEADERS.**

- Why do you think a prince or great leader might prefer to ride on a donkey rather than a horse?
- Why might *you* prefer to ride a donkey rather than a horse?
  1. Donkey is smaller and less threatening than a horse.
  2. Donkey is more sure-footed on rough trails than a horse.
  3. Donkey is less easily startled than a horse.

**ZECHARIAH (9:9), ONE OF THE PROPHETS, SAID THAT THE MESSIAH—THE GREAT PERSON WHO WILL COME TO LEAD THE WORLD TO A TIME OF PEACE AND GOODWILL—WILL ARRIVE RIDING ON A DONKEY.**

- That sounds pretty silly—a great leader arriving on a donkey.
- Why do you think that a great leader who is to bring peace to the world would arrive on a donkey rather than a horse?
- Rashi, one of our most honored teachers, who lived in the Middle Ages, taught that this is not really a message about the arrival of a person.
- It is to teach us about how the world will be different in the future.
  1. The horse has been an animal of war, “galloping triumphantly” on the field of battle.
  2. The donkey is a “quiet, reserved animal,” a symbol of peace. (S.P. Toperoff).
- So the Bible says that the donkey is the animal on which the Messiah will arrive.



**Gather the People**  
<http://www.gatherthepeople.org>

© 2003 Moshe ben Asher & Khulda bat Sarah